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AUTHOR Buchmiller, Archie A.
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ABSTRACT

Legislation enacted to attain educational accountability is discussed. At present, 23 states have such enactments. The major kinds of accountability enacted in each of these states are one or more of the following: PPBS, MIS, Uniform Accounting, Testing, Evaluation of Professional Employees, and Performance Contracting. The three most frequently specified systems are state testing or assessment, evaluation of professional employees, and PPBS. The legislation enacted so far most frequently emphasizes educational purposes or goals and points to the general direction of the public's expectations for accountability. Beyond goals and objectives, legislation is likely to be either prescriptively specific or general enough to permit wide latitude by which goals may be fulfilled. Thirteen states require measuring the level of pupil performance by some form of state testing or assessment. Most of the assessment legislation states an intent to evaluate the effectiveness of school programs and curriculum. The most common reasons for adoption of state assessment programs are the improvement of pupil performance, evaluation of educational programs, and the identification of performance levels in relationship to educational needs. States are more frequently turning to goals-and-objectives-based state assessment models. This permits the measurement of student performance with criterion-referenced instruments. A model act for a comprenensive state educational assessment and accountability program is provided. (DB)

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EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY: CHARACTERISTICS OF LEGISLATIVE MANDATES FOR STATE ASSESSMENT*

by

Archie A. Buchmiller, Ph.D.
Deputy State Superintendent
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Madison, Wisconsin

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The concept of educational accountability has found its way into the halls of the state legislatures and into the laws of twenty-three of these states. Methods to achieve greater educational accountability have become a high priority for educators, who have been caught between the concerns of angry taxpayers and the critics of the public schools in recent years. On the one hand, great pressures have been exerted on educators to reduce the costs of maintaining the public school system; while, on the other hand, advocates of educational reform suggest that the schools should provide additional educational alternatives from which students may make choices. Expanding the numbers of additional alternatives available to students will cost more, not less money. Between these two extremes, the reduction of costs and additional alternatives, there is probably a third group who is interested in reducing the cost of education and making it more effective at the same time. The rhetoric on educational accountability reflects considerable diversity, ranging from holding the schools accountable (Peterson, 1970) to that of educational fascism ("NEA," Education Daily, January 10, 1973).

In recent years, apparently some citizens felt that their involvement in educational affairs had been very limited and that they had been held at arm's length by the educational professionals within the walls of the school.

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Citizens are now determined to have a more meaningful involvement in educational decision making. One means of gaining such an involvement is to ask their elected political representatives to enact legislation which will both provide for the desired involvement and at the same time require a greater accountability from educators in respect to their stewardship of the public educational trust. As a result, there are legislative enactments and requirements to develop state assessment and evaluation systems as well as to use scientific management technologies such as systems analysis, PPBS, and management by objectives. Each of these systems demands the adoption of administrative styles which are said to provide measured objectivity and greater accountability in managing state and local educational systems.

The rising interest in the assessment of pupil performance and scientific management during the late 1960's developed the necessary pressures upon legislators to enact legislation to attain educational accountability. These legislative enactments of the various states have been summarized by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction under a grant from the Cooperative Accountability Project (CAP, Legislation by the States, 1972) under Section 505, Title V, Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Also developed under the grant from the Cooperative Accountability Project is a model act for a comprehensive state educational assessment and accountability program (see Appendix A).

As of this time, twenty-three states have enacted and require some type of state or local programs to achieve greater accountability. These states are Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. The information in Table I shows the major kinds of accountability enacted in each of these states.

TABLE I

THE SHAPE OF EDUCATIONAL
ACCOUNTABILITY LEGISLATION

State	PPBS	MIS	Uniform Accounting	Testing	Evaluation of Professional Employees	Performance Contracting
Alaska	X					
Arizona			X	X(2)		
California	X(2)			X(3)	X	X
Colorado	X			X		
Connecticut				X	X	
Florida				X(2)	X	
Hawaii	X					
Illinois	X					
Indiana	X					
Maryland				X		
Massachusetts				X		
Michigan				X		
Nebraska		X	X	X		
New Jersey					X	
New Mexico			X			
Ohio	X					
Oregon					X	
Pennsylvania				X		
Rhode Island		X	X	X(2)		
South Dakota					X	
Virginia				X	X	
Washington					X	
Wisconsin				X		

The type of accountability system and the number of states which have adopted each type are shown in Table II. The three most frequently specified systems are state testing or assessment(13), evaluation of professional employees(8), and planning, programming, budgeting systems(7). Seventeen states fix the responsibility for carrying out accountability systems on the State Board of Education or the Department of Education under the Chief State School Officer. Frequently, insufficient resources are provided to carry out the full intent of the legislation effectively.

TABLE II

MAJOR TYPES OF ACCOUNTABILITY
SYSTEMS AND NUMBER OF STATE ADOPTIONS

Types of State Accountability Systems	Number of State Adoptions
Planning, Programming, Budgeting Systems	7
Management Information Systems	2
Uniform Accounting Systems	4
State Testing and Assessment	13
Evaluation of Professional Employees	8
Performance Contracting	1

While it would seem that much of the public and political interest in educational accountability is serious, there is little agreement as to the processes by which it will or should be attained. The public's preoccupation with educational assessment and educational efficiency and effectiveness is exacerbated by high costs and the rhetoric of its critics and opponents. Educational accountability falls under a broad umbrella which includes concepts such as performance contracting, educational vouchers, educational program audits, information systems, citizen interaction and involvement strategies, management by objectives, and other related scientific management technologies.

The Intent and Purpose of Accountability

Legislation enacted thus far most frequently emphasizes educational purposes or goals and points to the general direction of the public's

expectations for accountability. Examples of such rhetorical expectations found in the legislation are:

- To evaluate the adequacy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the public schools.
- To prepare and submit an annual report and recommendation to the legislature, governor, state board, and local school districts.
- To establish a uniform system of evaluating and assessing the performance of professional employees.
- To define and measure educational quality in the state.
- To expand the life options and opportunities for students.
- To determine the relative value of school programs as compared to their cost.
- To provide information to help school districts increase their efficiency using available financial resources.
- To evaluate experimental, innovative, and special programs.
- To gain greater public confidence in the schools.
- To establish a financial planning, management, and control system.
- To provide information to allocate state funds and professional services in a manner calculated to equalize educational opportunities.
- To improve competence in basic skills.
- To develop a system of educational self renewal.
- To determine the degree of achievement and accomplishment of the pupils in the schools.
- To assess and evaluate for purposes of school accreditation.

Beyond goals and objectives, legislation is likely to be either prescriptively specific or general enough to permit wide latitude by which the goals may be fulfilled.

State Assessment

Thirteen states require measuring the level of pupil performance by some form of state testing or assessment. They are: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Wisconsin. The most frequently specified component in state assessment is measurement of student achievement. Twelve states have such a requirement. Eight specify that the basic academic skill areas must be assessed or evaluated periodically, and six imply an assessment of subject matter areas other than those of the basic skills. Approximately one-half of the states specify the adoption and use of state educational goals and performance objectives. Almost all of the assessment legislation states an intent to evaluate the effectiveness of school programs and curriculum. Five states specify the use of norm- and/or criterion-referenced testing instruments. Eight states require the collection of non-achievement data and characteristics to be used in the analysis of achievement data results and to report to the public. Six states require the state educational agency to provide technical assistance to local school districts in regard to their participation in state assessment programs and/or the development of compatible programs at the local level. These data are illustrated in Table III.

TABLE III

MAJOR COMPONENTS OF STATE ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS

Characteristics	Number of States Requiring
State educational goals and/or objectives	6
Citizen involvement	1
Performance objectives	7
Achievement testing	12
School program and curriculum evaluation	12
Required performance analysis	2
SEA assistance to LEA's	6
Norm-referenced tests specified	4
Criterion-referenced tests specified	1
Intelligence tests specified	1
Requires non-achievement variables	2
Requires comparative data	6
Specified basic skills	8
Implies other areas	6
Specified grade levels	2
Specified age levels	1
Use of Results for:	
Improvement of pupil performance	5
Program evaluation	10
Identify status and needs	6

The most common reasons for adoption of state assessment programs are the improvement of pupil performance, evaluation of educational programs, and the identification of performance levels in relationship to educational needs. The data generated by state assessment programs are intended to provide information to school officials and the general public as to how well the schools are doing. There can be little question that such information would be useful in ascertaining whether or not the allegations of ineffectiveness and failure by education's critics can be substantiated.

Planning-Programming-Budgeting Systems

A second major means to achieve greater educational accountability found in present legislation can be classified as the broad general area of planning, programming, budgeting systems; expenditure accounting; and management information systems. Seven states--Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio--have adopted PPBS legislation; and four other states--Arizona, Nebraska, New Mexico and Rhode Island--have uniform accounting mandates which could easily develop into such systems. Several states allude to the benefits that will result from the development of management information systems which will be able to generate the kind of objective information that administrators and managers need to help them in making educational decisions. PPBS systems inherently include a total array of interrelated systems components from planning through evaluation as a part of the long range budgeting processes. Thus, the evaluation components of PPBS systems are likely to include some kind of assessment of educational performance.

With only one exception, State Departments of Education are named as the agency to develop and implement the required uniform state systems. Seven states specify the adoption of a formal PPBS format and mandate its use by school districts. Three states require public involvement in the development and operation of such systems, emphasizing the earlier point that citizens want greater involvement in the processes of educational decision making. Seven states specifically require an analysis of programs in relation to cost. Most of the legislatures require the state agency to make an annual accounting or report to it. Major legislative provisions of PPBS and the number of states requiring these are shown in Table IV.

TABLE IV

PPBS - MIS - UNIFORM ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS

Major Legislative Provisions	Number of States
Mandatory for LEAs	7
Cost performance analyses	7
PPBS format	7
Program analysis	7
Requires recommendations	4
Requires public involvement	3
Provides in-service training	5
SEA responsibility to implement	10
Reports to:	
State Legislature	7
State Board	4
Citizens	4

Evaluation of Professional Staff

The third major kind of legislative accountability is found in requirements for the evaluation of professional personnel employed by local school districts. Eight states--California, Connecticut, Florida, New Jersey, Oregon, South Dakota, Virginia and Washington--now have or are proposing such systems. It should be noted that the states that are moving toward competency-based certification will also probably utilize some kind of an evaluation component for determining eligibility for licenses or certificates to teach.

Two states have created state boards which are appointed by the Governor to carry out such provisions, three require systems to be developed and implemented by the state educational agency, and six states require state or local systems to adopt systems for the objective evaluation of the professional employees of the district.

Five states have enacted legislative provisions requiring the adoption of specific performance standards for determining the qualification or competence of teachers, administrators, and supervisors. Seven states

require that evaluations are to be discussed with employees and used as a basis for counseling the improvement related to professional competence. It appears that an implied intent of the legislation in several states would be to establish some objective basis to evaluate professional employees which could be used in contract renewal or non-renewal and dismissal of employees. This information is shown in Table V.

TABLE V

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEGISLATION REQUIRING
THE EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL

Major Characteristics	Number of States
Board appointed by Governor	2
Systems to be developed by SEA	3
Required by LEA	6
Specifies performance standards for teacher competence	5
Specifies administrators, supervisors	4
Specifies teachers	6
Evaluations to be discussed with employees	4
Provide for counseling and improvement	3

Since many of the current legislative acts specify the development of educational goals, this area is included in this brief overview of state educational accountability. Approximately thirty-five states report that they have adopted educational goals. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has analyzed goals adopted by states (CAP, Education in Focus, 1972).

Educational goals can be classified under three broad headings: (1) learner outcome goals, (2) process goals, and (3) institutional goals. Learner outcome goals most frequently relate to basic achievement skills, cultural appreciation, self realization, citizenship and political understanding, human relations, economic understanding, physical environment, mental and physical health, creative and critical thinking, career education and occupational competence, and values and ethics.

Process goals can be grouped into areas dealing with the educational environment, community involvement, student development, and student involvement.

Institutional goals most frequently relate to providing equal educational opportunities, designing and implementing instructional programs, organizational efficiency, communication, teacher quality, financial resource allocation, accountability, and educational research, development, and evaluation.

It should be noted that states are more frequently turning to goals-and-objectives-based state assessment models. This permits the measurement of student performance with criterion-referenced instruments which overcome alleged shortcomings of the more traditional norm-referenced tests.

Conclusions

State legislation to achieve greater educational accountability which has been enacted thus far can be synthesized into something approaching a consensus as follows:

- To evaluate the adequacy, efficiency, and effectiveness of educational programs, especially those involving the basic cognitive subject content areas.
- To provide information on student performance to governors, legislators, state school boards, and the public at large in order that they may compare the performance of one district with another or to ascertain the level of actual performance to expected performance.
- To provide information in respect to the allocation of resources and for educational decision making.
- To determine the effectiveness of professional employees in attaining educational goals and objectives.
- To establish a more uniform program and budgeting system to compare programs, performance, and costs and to inform the public.

The continuing interest in educational accountability seems to indicate that states which have not yet enacted legislation are very likely to consider doing so in the near future. Demands for making cost reductions and continuing development of educational credibility gaps will pressure for greater accountability on the part of educators. As experience is gained by the states which already have legislative mandates, future laws are likely to incorporate the benefits of this experience into their legislative mandates in order to develop systems which have proven to be administerable and which are able to obtain the kind of information that both the educators and the public want. Assuming that educational accountability is here to stay, at least for some time, legislators, administrators, educators, and school board members across the country need to acquire an awareness and an understanding of the concepts and implications that such programs have for improving educational opportunities provided for students.

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APPENDIX A

A MODEL ACT FOR A COMPREHENSIVE STATE EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM

(Title should conform to state requirements. The following is a suggestion: AN ACT to establish a system of educational accountability and assessment of educational performance to assist in the measurement of educational quality and to provide information to school officials and citizens.)

BE IT ENACTED (insert the required state enactment clause).

SECTION 1. Legislative Declaration.

(1) The legislature hereby declares that the purpose of this act is to initiate and maintain a state program of educational accountability and assessment of performance by the (state educational agency or board) which will obtain and provide meaningful information to the citizens about the public elementary and secondary educational schools in this state. The information about educational performance should relate to educational goals adopted by the (state educational agency or board), to student achievement in areas of the school curriculum and to investigation of meaningful relationships within this performance.

(2) The legislature further declares that public school districts shall participate in the state accountability and assessment program and adopt compatible district plans with this state system required in (1) to achieve improved educational accountability and report meaningful information and results to the public.

SECTION 2. Duties of the (State Educational Agency or Board).

(1) The (state educational agency or board) shall develop a state accountability and assessment program by (insert date) which will:

(a) Establish a procedure for the continuing examination and updating of adopted state goals for elementary and secondary education.

(b) Identify goal-related performance objectives that will lead toward achieving stated goals.

(c) Establish procedures for evaluating the state's and school district's performance in relation to stated goals and objectives. Appropriate instruments to measure and evaluate progress shall be used to evaluate student performance.

(2) The state's program shall provide for an annual review which shall include assessing the performance of students in at least (insert elementary and secondary grades or age levels or both) in such areas of knowledge, skills, attitudes and understandings and other characteristics or variables that will aid in identifying relationships and differentials in the level of educational performance which may exist between schools and school districts in the state.

(3) The (state educational agency or board) shall:

(a) Promulgate rules for the implementation of this section.

(b) Employ staff as authorized by the legislature and enter into such contracts as may be necessary to carry out its duties and responsibilities under this section.

(c) Establish recommendations for components of school district accountability programs and provide technical assistance to school districts in planning and implementing their plans.

(d) Provide inservice training for personnel who will be involved in carrying out the state's program of educational accountability and assessment of performance.

(e) Monitor periodically the assessment and evaluation of programs implemented by school districts and make recommendations for their improvement and increased effectiveness.

(f) Annually report and make recommendations to the governor and legislature, the state board of education, school boards and the general public on its findings with regard to the performance of the state elementary and secondary education school system.

(4) The (state educational agency or board) may establish a state advisory committee on educational accountability to make recommendations and assist it in carrying out its responsibilities under this section.

SECTION 3. Local Accountability and Assessment Programs.

The school board of every district in this state shall:

(1) Adopt a plan for a local accountability program designed to measure the adequacy and efficiency of educational programs offered by the school district, in accordance with recommendations and criteria promulgated by the (state educational agency or board) and the policies of the school board by (insert date). The school board may appoint a broadly constituted citizen advisory accountability committee to make recommendations to the board relative to the program of educational accountability, but it shall be the sole responsibility of the district school board to implement plans required under this section.

(2) Report periodically to the residents of the school district and the (state educational agency or board), in such form and giving such information as the (state educational agency or board) requires, on the extent to which the school district has achieved the goals and objectives of its adopted plans.

SECTION 4. Appropriation.

In addition to any other appropriation, there is hereby appropriated to the (state educational agency or board) the sum of $_____ for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 19___, and for each fiscal year thereafter, to carry out the purposes of this act.

SECTION 5. Effective Date.

This act shall take effect on _____, 19___.